

Existing law, relative to a Performance Award or an Honors Award under the Tuition Opportunity Programs for Students (TOPS), establishes certain requirements that a student must meet once enrolled in college in order to maintain continued state payment of tuition and other award amounts. Among those requirements is that the student must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale at the end of each academic year. For a student receiving a Performance Award, the state pays tuition (within specified limits) plus the sum of \$200 per semester; for a student receiving an Honors Award, the state pays tuition (within specified limits) plus the sum of \$400 per semester.

New law retains existing law except adds a provision that if at any time an otherwise eligible student receiving a Performance Award or an Honors Award fails to have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale at the end of any academic year but has and continues to maintain a cumulative grade point average at least equal to that required for continued participation by a recipient of an Opportunity Award, the student receiving a Performance Award or an Honors Award shall remain eligible for state payments but only in the amount provided for a recipient of an Opportunity Award. States that new law applies to all students who receive state payments pursuant to a Performance Award or an Honors Award, including all such students from the beginning of the program. Existing law requires a student receiving an Opportunity Award to have a cumulative grade point average (at the end of each academic year) of at least 2.30 (calculated on a 4.00 scale) after completion of 24 credit hours and at least 2.50 after completion of 48 credit hours. For a student receiving an Opportunity Award, the state only pays tuition (within specified limits).

Existing law specifies that if at any time a student fails to maintain the cumulative grade point average required for continuation in the program or is placed on academic probation by the institution attended, the student shall become ineligible for further payments.

New law retains existing law.

Existing law also provides, however, that payments limited to tuition amounts only may be reinstated upon attainment of the grade point average required for the original award and upon the lifting of academic probation, provided that the period of ineligibility did not persist for more than two years from the date of loss of eligibility.

New law retains existing law except, rather than referring to attainment of the grade point average required for the original award, refers to attainment of the grade point average required by new law for a student to maintain continued state payments once enrolled in college. Also refers to the lifting of academic probation, if applicable.

Prior law provided that students who initially qualify for more than one TOPS award shall choose the award they wish to receive and thereafter be bound by the provisions of law relative to continued state payments pursuant to such award.

New law provides instead that each student who initially qualifies for more than one TOPS award shall receive the award requiring the most rigorous eligibility criteria, unless the student chooses to receive the TOPS-Tech Award and enrolls in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution pursuant to provisions relative to such an award. States that once the student who has chosen the TOPS-Tech Award so enrolls, his choice is irrevocable.

Effective upon signature of governor (June 18, 1999).

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(4)(a) and (d) and (L))